

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 3334

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB PINT EC
SUBJ: NATIONWIDE GENERAL STRIKE

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE JOINT NATIONAL GENERAL STRIKE CARRIED OUT BY ECUADOR'S THREE LABOR CONFEDERATIONS MAY 18 FELL BADLY SHORT OF ITS GOALS. THE FAILURE HAS WEAKENED LABOR'S INFLUENCE ON THE GOE AND MAY PLACE STRAINS ON THE CONFEDERATIONS' LEADERSHIP AND ON THE "UNITY MOVEMENT" BETWEEN THE CONFEDERATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. THE THREE ECUADOREAN NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATIONS (CEOSL, CEDOC, AND CTE) FINALLY CARRIED OUT THEIR MUCH BALLY-HOOED AND POSTPONED NATIONAL GENERAL STRIKE MAY 18. EVEN BY THE MOST GENEROUS ESTIMATES IT WAS A FAILURE.

3. THE CONFEDERATIONS HAD HOPED TO INCREASE THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE GOE AND DEMONSTRATE THEIR STRENGTH AND UNITY THROUGH A REPEAT OF THE FIRST JOINT GENERAL STRIKE HELD IN NOVEMBER 1975. ON THAT OCCASION VIRTUALLY ALL COMMERCE, PRODUCTION AND TRANSPORTATION IN THE MAJOR CITIES WERE SHUT DOWN. THIS TIME TRANSPORTATION AND COMMERCE REMAINED ALMOST NORMAL WHILE A SMALL NUMBER OF INDUSTRIAL SITES WAS CLOSED. THERE WERE SPORADIC OUTBURSTS OF STUDENT VIOLENCE AND THE ARREST OF SEVERAL LABOR LEADERS.

4. THE FAILURE OF THE STRIKE CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO SEVERAL
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CAUSES:

---HAVING EXPERIENCED A PEACEFUL STRIKE IN 1975, THE EARLIER PUBLIC APPREHENSION WAS NOT REPEATED AND MANY WHO PLAYED IT SAFE IN 1975 CONTINUED THEIR NORMAL ACTIVITIES.

---THERE WAS LITTLE RANK AND FILE SENTIMENT IN FAVOR OF THE

STRIKE AND MANY BASE UNIONS WERE NOT CONSULTED.

---THE GOE, IN THE PERSON OF THE LABOR MINISTER, ACTIVELY OPPOSED THE STRIKE AND SERVED NOTICE THAT EMPLOYERS DID NOT HAVE TO PAY STRIKING WORKERS AND THAT THEY COULD REQUEST MINISTRY PERMISSION TO DISMISS THEM.

---THE SPONSORING FEDERATIONS THEMSELVES SUFFERED INTERNAL DIVISIONS AND PREPARED POORLY FOR THE STRIKE.

5. THE CONFEDERATIONS HAVE CLAIMED THAT THE STRIKE SUCCEEDED, BUT THEY UNDERSTAND THE DEGREE OF THEIR FAILURE. RECRIMINATIONS HAVE ALREADY BEGUN. EVEN BEFORE THE STRIKE THE CONFEDERATIONS, IN A JOINT DECLARATION SIGNED BY THEIR THREE PRESIDENTS, DENOUNCED THE PEKING-LINE DIVISIONISTS AND ACCUSED THEM OF BEING UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE CIA.

6. COMMENT: IT IS STILL EARLY TO DETERMINE THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE STRIKE'S FAILURE. BUT IT CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THAT THE CONFEDERATIONS' CONTROL OVER THEIR AFFILIATES IS NOT AS GREAT AS PREVIOUSLY BELIEVED. THEREFORE, THE LABOR'S LIMITED INFLUENCE ON THIS GOVERNMENT WILL SURELY BE WEAKENED.

7. THE STRIKE FURTHER SERVED TO IDENTIFY THE THREE CONFEDERATIONS AS A SINGLE ENTITY IN THE PUBLIC'S MIND. SEVERAL NEWSPAPER ARTICLES DESCRIBED THE INTERNAL DIVISION AS BEING THE PEKING-LINE COMMUNISTS.V. "THE THREE CONFEDERATIONS (CTE, CEDOC, AND CEOSL) CONTROLLED BY THE SOVIET-LINE COMMUNIST PARTY." (CEOSL IS OSTENSIBLY DEMOCRATIC AND IS AFFILIATED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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ORIT AND THE ICFTU). THE PRESS AND THE GOE HAVE DONE WHATEVER POSSIBLE TO PAINT THE STRIKE AS BEING TOTALLY UNJUSTIFIED IN ECONOMIC OR TRADE UNION TERMS AND AS BEING TOTALLY MOTIVATED BY EXTREMIST POLITICAL FORCES. LABOR LEAVES THIS STRIKE WITH DIMINISHED PUBLIC SUPPORT.

8. FINALLY, THE OVERWHELMING FAILURE MUST PUT PRESSURES ON THE UNITY OF THE THREE CONFEDERATIONS AND ON THE CONFEDERATIONS' LEADERSHIP. GIVEN THE TOTALITARIAN NATURE OF THEIR ORGANIZATION, THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNIST CTE AND THE MARXIST CEDOC (THAT CLAT WING OF CEDOC DID NOT STRIKE) ARE SAFE IN THEIR POSITIONS. CEOSL'S JOSE CHAVEZ, WHO BILLED HIMSELF AS THE STRIKE'S PRINCIPAL LEADER WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME EXPLAINING HIS FAILURE TO HIS LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND MAY FIND HIMSELF OBLIGED TO REDUCE THE SCOPE OF HIS "UNITY" ACTIVITIES WITH THE OTHER CONFEDERATIONS.
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